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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000365

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G (E.WEIGOLD, K.FRIEDRICH), NEA/PI, NEA/ARPI,
STATE ALSO FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: INVITING WOMEN LEADERS TO FORUM ON POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION: OMAN ACCEPTS

REF: SECSTATE 31649

1. (SBU) The Sultan's Foreign Policy Advisor Dr. Omar al-Zawawi and Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi both assured the Ambassador of the delivery and acceptance of the invitations to Higher Education Minister Dr. Rawya al-Busaidi and oil company executive Ms. Asillah al-Harthy to attend the March 8 women leaders forum at the Department of State. The Higher Education Minister's office confirmed to the Embassy March 1 that Dr. Rawya will indeed attend the forum. Asillah al-Harthy is currently on leave status but her office confirmed March 2 her acceptance of the invitation. Their visa applications should be processed at the Embassy by March 6.

Biographic Backgrounds

2. (U) Dr. Rawya bint Saud al-Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education

On March 8, 2004, Dr. Rawya became the first woman on the Arabian Peninsula to head a government ministry when she was elevated from her previous position as Under Secretary for Higher Education. She was just the second woman in Omani history to attain minister-equivalent rank. Dr. Rawya's post-secondary educational background is in Iraq and the UK, culminating in her attaining a Ph.D. from Oxford University in 1988. She has spent her entire professional career in the field of education. Dr. Rawya previously served as Director for Academic Affairs at Sultan Qaboos University (which at the time was Oman's sole institution of higher education), and later became an advisor to the Minister of Education before transferring to the Ministry of Higher Education as Under Secretary. In addition to Arabic, Dr. Rawya speaks English and Swahili. She is fond of taking family vacations in the United States. No English interpretation will be required.

3. (U) Ms. Asillah bint Zahir al-Harthy

One of the leading business women in Oman, Asillah al-Harthy is Head of Corporate Affairs at Oman Oil Company, a commercial company wholly owned by the Omani government. A graduate of Harvard Business School (1999), she currently sits on the Dean's Council of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. In January, 2005, she was named one of 237 "Young Global Leaders" at the World Economic Forum in Davos. She is a past Board Member (appointed by Sultan Qaboos) of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, during which time she was the only female member of that council. She took part in the Omani delegation that visited Harvard University in April 2004 in honor of Sultan Qaboos' endowment of a professorship there. No English interpretation will be required.

Point of Contact

4. (U) The Embassy's point of contact for this event is
Pol/Econ Chief Michael Snowden.
BALTIMORE